

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 103.—THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1890. PRICE TWOPENCE.

"THE LAIRD O' COCKPEN."

By RITA.

Author of "Dame Durden," "Gretchen," "Darby and Joan," "Shelva," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIII. "FOR THE BEST."

How poor and crude a thing seems youth before the finished graces and ready tact of a woman of the world!

Not by so much as the flicker of an eyelash did Mrs. Dunleith betray the smallest feeling, while I—I turned hot and cold, flushed and paled, and could scarcely summon self-command to bow, or return the conventional greetings of society.

For the sight of that woman recalled everything—my jealous fears, my self-torments, my lover's broken faith, my own doubts—and I read even in the one brief glance that I was no stranger to her, that she knew something about me. Perhaps Douglas had discussed me with her; perhaps they had laughed together over my foolish faith, my ready conquest!

With a great effort I recalled my scattered wits, and tried to resume the composure which had been so easily disturbed. Some grey-headed old gentleman was bowing to me, and offering his arm to take me in to dinner. I learned later on that he was a learned and celebrated professor at the University. I fear the poor man must have found me a terribly stupid and uninteresting companion. Try as I might I could not keep my attention from wandering to that grey-gowned syren, with her soft voice, her low, sweet laugh, her indolent, graceful gestures. The man

who had taken her in to dinner seemed very devoted; he had eyes and ears for no one else. But as far as I could judge there was not much in her. She seldom spoke, and then only in brief response to her admirer's observations; but she was attentive and interested—I suppose men like that; then she had so sweet a smile, so perfect a manner, that most of the women present seemed stiff, or coarse, or crude by comparison.

I wondered not that the delicate flattery of such a woman's interest should charm any young man's senses—or old man's, either, for the matter of that. The fortunate, or unfortunate, individual on whom she was practising her arts was decidedly middle-aged, almost as old, I fancied, as my professor; but he seemed charmed and interested, which my friend certainly did not. After a time he gave up conversation, and devoted himself to his dinner, only addressing an occasional word to me now and then respecting the merits of some dish I had refused.

But I had no appetite, and the dinner seemed to me a very long and wearisome ceremony. Like all things human—be they bad or good—it came to an end at last, and the silks and velvets rustled away into the drawing-room, and I found myself once more under Bella's wing.

Scarcely had we seated ourselves, however, when Mrs. Dunleith dropped, in graceful languor, into the low settee by my side. She commenced to talk to Bella. I most assuredly was not inclined to further or commence conversation. They discussed Inverness, the Northern meetings, Highland scenery, and various other subjects. She told us that she intended returning shortly to the Romans.

"Indeed," she added, glancing at me,

"I had not intended to stay so long in Edinburgh as I have done. I merely came on a matter of business—to assist a friend in whom I take an interest—a very great interest. I am happy to say I have been of some service to him; but he is leaving Scotland next week, and then I shall go back to my little house again."

I was silent; but the hot blood burnt in my cheeks, and a feeling of bitter indignation swelled in my heart. Well enough I knew who was the friend in whom she took "a very great interest." So it was through her influence that Douglas Hay had secured this appointment in Canada—that he was about to leave the country. Well, it did not matter now; whether he was in this land or any other could make no difference to me. Only a spasm of jealous agony contracted my heart as I thought how she had come between us; for some instinct told me that no doubt she had warned him against the folly of early engagements, or had worked on his feelings until they seemed selfish and inconsiderate. She had parted us with her sweet voice, her pretended sympathy, her charms and witcheries, beside which I felt my youth, and bluntness, and inexperience made but a poor show.

And now she was sitting there, stabbing me with every word, and hint, and graceful, languorous glance; she who could do what all my love had been unable to do!

I wonder how it is a woman guesses she has met a rival?

Mrs. Dunleith and I had never interchanged a word with one another before this night, yet we both seemed to recognise that we had cared for the same man. I say "had cared"—but probably she cared still. I fancied so; and I almost wondered she had not tried to win him more securely; surely it could not have been so very difficult for one who had done so much?

I had yet to learn, however, that Douglas, if malleable up to a certain point, could be iron and adamant beyond. He had left himself in this woman's hands with the carelessness and conceit of youth; he knew she cared for him. But—though I only learnt this long afterwards—he did not care for her in like manner.

He pulled himself up short and sharp, just as she fancied she was leading him where she desired. I might not have believed this then, even at her own confession; but the day was coming when I should learn more of men's ways and feel-

ings, and judge them less harshly, even if I thought of them less highly.

It was a relief when Kenneth entered, and at once joined us. Then the other men came in from the dining-room, and we broke up into groups of twos and threes, and music and conversation filled up the rest of the evening.

"I hope you will enjoy yourself here," said Kenneth, as he bade me good night later on. "I shall come and take you about as much as possible; you have been rather moped at Grannie's. A little amusement and excitement will do you good."

I agreed that it would. I had determined to throw myself heart and soul into everything that was pleasurable and gay. Surely that would cure this dull ache, this constant memory?

I was so tired that night that I could scarcely speak to Bella, and in two minutes after my head touched the pillow I was sound asleep.

Clear air, a bright sky, noise, bustle, exhilaration. I woke to all this, and prepared, with a lighter heart than I had known for many a long day, to explore the city. Kenneth was our guide, and we drove, of course, through Princes Street, and viewed Scott's gigantic monument, and the beautiful public gardens, and the famous Castle, and walked through the old town, and went up to Arthur's Seat, and then returned, tired, but by no means half sated with sight-seeing, for luncheon.

To my inexpressible amazement, who should drop in at luncheon time—with all the "savoir faire" of an old and welcome friend—but the Laird of Corriemoor. He explained he was in Edinburgh on business for a week or two; and as the Frasers were very old friends, he naturally came to see them at once. Bella looked mischievously at me as she listened to his elaborate explanations. It was plain that she, at all events, did not credit him with absolute truthfulness in the matter.

The Frasers were, however, quite unsuspicious, and if I felt a little embarrassed and surprised at first, I hope I did not show it very plainly. Bella assured me I did not; so I was comforted, and put the best face on the matter.

I must candidly say that whatever business had brought the Laird to the city, he did not spend very much time over it. He was constantly with us,

greatly to Kenneth's annoyance. He took us to theatres and museums, and accompanied us on drives, walks, and excursions of all kinds.

I cannot but say I enjoyed it all; he was so well-informed and clever, that all matters of history, archæology, and literature connected with Scotland became both interesting and intelligible to me.

He seemed to know every house and history of the old town, and every story and legend of famous Holyrood. We spent hours there, and the sorrow and the pathos of its many memories acquired a painful and vivid interest for me.

No longer could I say that I had little knowledge of and less interest in Scotland and things Scotch. With such a guide and companion that confession would have been rank heresy. Quiet and grave as the Laird of Corriemoor seemed on first acquaintance, it was marvellous how he unbent after a time, and how genial and pleasant a companion he could make himself.

Scarcely a day passed that we did not meet. Indeed, I had grown so used to his appearance and escort that I should have felt quite strange without him.

Bella wisely kept silence, and for the space of three weeks matters went on as I have described.

Mrs. Dunleith had gone back to Inverness. That fact said plainly to me that Douglas Hay had taken his departure also. I had not seen him since we parted at Tom-na-Hurich, nor heard word or news of him.

It could not matter. I told myself that silence was best, and its sombre veil fell darkly between my love and me.

A change—a subtle, indefinable change had come over my feelings and myself. Whether I was the happier or the better for it, I could not say; but at least I had a brief space of rest and peace, and I told myself that it would last always—always now.

"Bella," I said, coming abruptly into the bedroom one evening when my cousin was comfortably ensconced in an arm-chair, and luxuriously busy in doing nothing except looking at the fire. "Bella, I have some news for you."

She raised her merry, dark eyes to my face.

"Are you sure," she said, "that it will be news?"

"It ought to be," I said. "I only made up

my mind half an hour ago. I am going to marry the Laird."

"Of course," she said, coolly; "I always knew you would."

I sank down in the companion arm-chair to her own, and looked at her with indignant unbelief.

"I am sure you did not," I said: "you wouldn't have known it—no one could. Nothing was further from my intentions. I never dreamt of such a thing when I came here."

"Probably not," answered Bella; "but, dreaming or waking, one could see what it was all tending to. And, indeed, dear," she added, gravely, "I am very, very glad. He is so good—and the marriage is altogether so suitable. And certainly he has been most devoted ever since he saw you first."

I laughed somewhat hysterically.

"Well, this was the 'third time of asking,'" I said. "He has certainly displayed his national virtue of perseverance."

"How did he do it?" asked Bella, laughing. "Somehow I cannot fancy the Laird making love."

"Well, he did not follow the example of his countryman in 'Dean Ramsay's Reminiscences,' and allure me to a churchyard to say: 'My folk lie there—wad we no' like to lie there wi' them?' His three proposals have all been very matter of fact. I—I am glad of that. I hope he won't 'make love' as you call it. Don't you think he is too sensible, and—well, and too old for that, Bella?"

"As to being sensible," said Bella; "don't they say love makes the wisest man the biggest fool? While as for age, I wouldn't be sure that the Laird is so very old, my dear—not more than seven or eight-and-thirty. That's not old for a man."

I was silent—gazing meditatively into the fire, and twisting absently round and round my finger the ring that had been so newly placed there—just to keep me in mind of him, my affianced had said; on the morrow he was to bring me another one.

"No," I said at last, "I suppose not; but it seems old, Bella. I am only seventeen."

"Have you quite made up your mind?" she asked, gravely. "Do you think you have got over that—that other; that you have really forgotten?"

"I am quite sure," I said, slowly, though

a strange tightness seemed about my heart, and a lump rose to my throat and impeded my speech. "I do not say I have forgotten, but I have ceased to care; I have quite got over that fancy at last."

Bella looked at me somewhat anxiously.

"I hope—oh, I hope you are not deceiving yourself, Athole," she said. "You may make two lives unhappy instead of one, and, after all, do yourself no good. I suppose you don't care—very much—for Donald Campbell?"

I was silent for a moment, trying to face the question honestly and fairly, as I knew it ought to be faced.

"I care for him enough to marry him," I said, at last; "I know there is no romance about it, but that is all the better. Most married people, as far as I can judge, get heartily sick of one another in a year or two; I suppose it comes from expecting too much, and all that glorified ideality which means love, and is as unreal as—well, as love. I have done with all that nonsense; I learnt my lesson, and now I am going to profit by it. We shall be a sensible, matter-of-fact pair, neither of us expecting too much, or exacting too much, from the other. We ought to be happy."

Bella shook her head; her bright eyes looked a little dim and saddened as I met their loving gaze.

"Ah, my dear," she said, "those sentiments would sound very well if you were thirty-seven, instead of seventeen; as it is, I know you neither feel nor believe them. Be honest, and say so."

I only shook my head.

"Indeed, Bella, I do mean them; I have grown much older and more sensible in these last few weeks; and I like him very much, I really do; he is so good and kind, and he seems so true. After all, that is the best thing to trust to—better than romance, or love. And you know I am not wanted at home. Since papa married again he does not seem to care for me as he used to do; and Eleanor is so jealous; I suppose she wants to have him all to herself. Well, I will not interfere with them any more. It seems funny"—and I laughed, but not very mirthfully I fear—"to think that I shall be able to invite them to stay with me, to offer them Highland hospitality—fishing, shooting, all that sort of thing. By the way, what kind of place is Corriemoor?"

"I have never seen it," answered Bella, "but I have always heard it is a very fine

place, and very large; miles and miles of moorland; lochs for fishing, and shooting wild birds; grand scenery; beautiful air. Oh, I'm sure it is a very fine place, indeed! But how will you like the Laird's mother, I wonder? You know she lives with him, to keep house for him? But perhaps she will leave when you go there."

"She is welcome to stay," I answered, with indifference. "I am sure I shall not interfere with her; and as I am quite ignorant of housekeeping, I shall be very glad to have her."

I rose from my chair, and Bella did the same.

Suddenly she drew me into her arms, as tenderly as a mother might have done.

"Heaven bless you, poor, wee bairn!" she said, softly; "and give you strength, and make the path easy for your feet. I cannot say that I'm altogether happy about you, though you've acted wisely; and he's a good man, and loves you dearly, I am sure; still——"

My kiss stayed the words on her lips; and they ended in a sigh.

CHAPTER XXIV. HONEYMOON PROSPECTS.

So it was all settled, and I had sealed my fate.

Every one seemed pleased who heard the news, and congratulations poured in on all sides—every one, that is to say, with the exception of Kenneth; he neither looked pleased nor expressed satisfaction. However, I fear I paid little heed to him. I was too engrossed with the new responsibilities and exigencies of my position as a betrothed maiden.

Grannie wrote rapturously on the subject, and declared that I must be married from her house. We all seemed to take my father's consent for granted; but really there could be no possible objection to such a son-in-law as the Laird of Corriemoor, and I had not the slightest doubt that he would only be too grateful to the man who would take me off his hands, and leave him free to be the slave and worshipper of his newly wedded and most exacting young wife.

My lover was not a very passionate or ardent one. He evidently liked to be with me, he was most generous in gifts and offerings, but he did not attempt that performance of which I had expressed such a nervous dread—namely, "making love."

I was not of a demonstrative nature

myself. It had never been easy to me to express my feelings. I had none of the pretty, provocative, caressing ways of most women, and it would have been a sheer impossibility for me to have coquetted with, or teased, my grave, staid lover—even had I wished to do so.

He took me for walks and drives as of old, but I still had Bella with me, and he never made the slightest objection to her company.

At the end of a fortnight he hinted that he must leave Edinburgh, and betake himself to his ancestral halls, there to break the news to his mother.

"It is more respectful to do so by word of mouth," he said, and I agreed with due deference, and a vague expression of regret at his absence, which I am afraid I did not really experience.

My visit to Edinburgh was drawing to a close, so Bella and I returned under his escort, and after spending one night in Inverness he left for Corriemoor, and I settled down to the old, quiet life, which lasted, with but little variation, until the arrival of my father's letter.

It came from Cairo, where they were staying, and, as I expected, gave glad and gracious sanction to the proposal of any individual foolish and generous enough to relieve a father of the expense and responsibility of a feminine dependent. It is a daughter's duty to get married—well, if possible—but at all events to get married. Probably he had not hoped, or expected, such a speedy or gratifying result from my visit to his native land. Of course he knew Corriemoor well, and the Campbells of Corriemoor were as a household word in the family. He would not be back in England for six months, but there was no need to wait for his presence if the bridegroom was impatient and the bride acquiescent. He enclosed a cheque for two hundred pounds for the trousseau, and referred the Laird to his lawyers for all particulars as to his affairs and my prospective inheritance; announced that El-anor joined with him in love and all good wishes, and that they both trusted I might be very happy—as happy as they were themselves.

That was all. Grannie and I read it, and then I sent it on to the Laird, with an enclosure for himself. He was quite satisfied, and wrote back proposing that we should be married as soon after the New Year as I could decide upon.

I looked apprehensively at Grannie as I

handed her the letter containing this suggestion.

"It is so soon," I said.

"Tis ill waiting when the will is gude," laughed the old lady. "Take him, my bairn, and don't ask for delays. You'll aye be the better for settling down and getting acquainted with one another, and no courting will teach ye that; take an auld woman's word for it. Ye may see each other every day, and all day, but it's no' the same as one good week of steady matrimony. Lovers are aye on their guard, but husbands and wives know that they must put up wi' their bargain, and if it is based on solid virtues, and good, honest love and respect, there's nae much to fear of results."

Wise words, good sound doctrines, Grannie. A pity they sounded so cold and commonplace to me.

While December was yet in its early days the Laird returned, and the question of our speedy marriage was again mooted. I let them arrange it as they pleased, so the middle of January was fixed upon for the all important ceremony, and I was engulfed in a whirl of millinery and haberdashery, which was a very novel sensation, and appeared to afford endless gratification and excitement to Grannie and my cousins.

My future mother-in-law sent me a kindly though somewhat formal letter of congratulation and welcome. She regretted her health would not permit of the long journey to Inverness in the winter time; but looked forward to welcoming me at Corriemoor as her daughter when our honeymoon was over.

Our honeymoon! The words seemed to appal me as I saw them standing out in that clear, prim writing. My spirits fell as they had not fallen yet. A honeymoon—a whole long, weary, dreary month to be spent in uninterrupted companionship with just one man. No merry feminine chattering crew to laugh and jest with—no friends to visit or receive. Only he and I together—husband and wife—yoked for life in matrimonial harness to make the best or worst of our experiment.

For one wicked, unholy moment my thoughts flew to Douglas. There would have been no hardship in such a prospect had he occupied the place of bridegroom; but the Laird . . . what could we say, what could we do, that would make the time less wearisome and monotonous? And in the winter—the cold, dreary days when

rain or snow might keep us chained to the dreary grandeur of hotels. Ugh! I shuddered as I thought of it.

A sudden resolution took possession of me. With the letter in my hand I marched off to the drawing-room, where my affianced was awaiting my tardy presence.

"Laird," I said, abruptly, having yet vainly tried to accustom my tongue to more familiar greeting, "where are we going when we're married? Do you want to stay here—in Scotland?"

He turned his ruddy, weather-beaten face to me in some surprise at my unexpected question.

"I had thought of taking you to Perth—it is a bonnie town," he said, with some hesitation. "I fear the weather will be somewhat inclement for the lochs, or we might have gone to the Western Highlands; but, my dear, it is for you to say. Where would you like to go yourself? Just say the word, and I'm not likely to deny you."

"I should like to go away from Scotland altogether," I said. "It is so cold, so bleak, so dreary. Couldn't we go abroad—say to the South of France, the Riviera, anywhere where we could find a blue sky and sunshine. I feel froz-n up here."

"Go abroad!" he repeated, genuine consternation visible on every line of his face. "Away—out of the country—is that what you mean?"

"Yes," I said, "to some warm country. I know you never have been out of Scotland; but that will make it all the more interesting. I'll do all the talking—if you can't speak French or German."

He sighed hopelessly.

"You shall do just as you please, Athole," he said, with creditable meekness. "I suppose Scotland is somewhat bleak and cold for a delicate wee thing like yourself. But remember, my dear, I know nothing of foreign ways and customs, and fear I shall aye be blundering and bothering you. Will you put up with that?"

"Oh, yes," I said, laughing, and too pleased at my easy triumph to cavil at anything else. "Don't be afraid, Laird; we shall get on very well, and it will be great fun to see how surprised you will be at the difference between foreign customs and your national ones."

He smiled a little sadly. Perhaps he did not think his honeymoon a cheerful prospect, or see the "fun" that his unfamiliarity with things new, and strange,

and incomprehensible might afford me, in quite the same light as I did.

However, it was arranged that we should journey into foreign lands in search of warmth and sunlight; and the excitement of making plans and deciding upon different routes greatly relieved the usual monotony of our daily interviews.

I had always had a great desire to go to Nice and Cannes, and see the lovely blue Mediterranean, and revel amidst palms and orange groves, when less favoured folk were shivering over fires and fogs at home.

I hated cold. Warmth, brightness sunshine, were like life to me, and the vision of a Scotch winter in the lonely wilderness of Corriemoor had simply appalled me.

But I had triumphed. Whatever the Laird really thought he affected "a virtue though he had it not." He seemed pleased and contented, and I was willing to believe he really felt so.

Meanwhile the days seemed to race along. The last remaining week of maiden liberty already announced itself.

We had kept the New Year with wassail, and merriment, and much feasting, and my relatives had vied with each other in the giving of dinners, and suppers, and such-like festivals, in honour of my prospective bridegroom and myself.

I was growing a little tired of it all—of the speeches which were almost always the same, the solemn ceremonies of eating and drinking, which invariably lapsed into orgies when ladies withdrew and whisky appeared, and the revellers emptied the "flowing bowl" to our health with more goodwill than discretion. There certainly was a good deal of similarity in all these entertainments, and I now and then had serious doubts as to whether even my grave and strong-headed Donald was altogether circumspect in the matter of potations.

I supposed, however, it was the custom of the country, though, for the life of me, I could not see why people should drink more than was good for them, and incur the penalties and discomforts arising therefrom; in order to show their appreciation of a fellow mortal's matrimonial bliss.

But the national beverage—with or without excuse—was ever flowing in generous streams, and all sorts and conditions of men partook of it, and bore the result of it.

My wedding-day dawned clear and cold,

with a steely sky, and faint gleams of sunshine. In accordance with Scotch habits, I was to be married in the house.

Bella assisted at the important function of the toilet, which was simplicity itself.

"If only you were not so pale," she said, as she fastened the snowy veil which covered me from head to foot.

I looked at myself with a strange sense of unrecognition. So small; so white; with such wistful, dark eyes; such tremulous, pale lips! Surely this was not how a happy bride should look?

But, was I—happy?

For a moment the thought flashed across me, keen in its pain and regret. The face that looked back at me was the face of one who had abandoned all hope and lost all joy. For the first time it seemed to me that I was acting both wrongly and unwisely. I was marrying a man for whom I cared very little, if at all—certainly not as a wife should care for her husband.

Certainly I had made no false professions. I had never told him I loved him; but perhaps he had taken that for granted. The full importance and solemnity of my action impressed me at last. Up to this moment, when I stood and looked at that small, white figure, and that young, sad face, and knew them for my own on this my bridal day, I had not fully realised what I was taking upon myself.

I shuddered and turned aside, and for one brief moment my self-command trembled in the balance.

Bella took my hands, a look of alarm in her eyes.

"Hush, Athole! Oh, my dear, you mustn't break down—not now!"

I snatched my hands from her grasp, and pressed them tight against my eyes, trying to keep back the tears that threatened to break forth. I shook from head to foot, but I would not give way to the hysterical emotion that had seized me.

It was so foolish, so weak, and, ah! so useless now.

"Don't speak, Bella; just leave me quiet for a moment," I entreated; and, with ready tact and good sense, she moved away and stood by the window, waiting till I had recovered my self-control.

Presently I turned to her, and held out my hand.

"I am quite ready; let us go down," I said.

My voice was quite steady. She looked at me; I saw her eyes grow suddenly dim; but mine were dry and tearless now.

ON THE EMBANKMENT.

WHITEFRIARS AND BRIDEWELL.

IN the way of a new experience of travel in London, what could be more surprising than to find the omnibus, on the top of which one expected to pursue the familiar route along Fleet Street to Ludgate Hill, suddenly turning down Norfolk Street, and bringing its passengers into acquaintance with the first-floor windows of that usually tranquil thoroughfare? For the occupants of these same first-floor windows it must have been equally astonishing to see a double, treble, or perhaps quadruple line of vehicles of all kinds mixed up in something like a "jam." The cause was not far to seek. Fleet Street was in open insurrection, huge barricades of wooden blocks stretched from side to side, a battery of paviers was established in the centre of the roadway, and a brisk fusillade of chipping and hammering was heard all along the line from Saint Clement Danes to Ludgate Circus.

With all this maelstrom of traffic thus suddenly poured upon the Embankment, how changed was the scene upon that fine river esplanade! For once was realised the Embankment of one's dreams. London, long separated from her river, was now celebrating a reconciliation, and we passengers on the top of the omnibus were assistants at the function. How brightly gleamed the river in its full tranquillity—a silver crescent, with the Abbey and Saint Paul's at either horn! How pleasant was the verdure of the gardens of the Temple, crowned by its roofs, its towers, and ancient halls! Beyond the Temple rises Mount Carmel, terraced by printing offices, and familiarly known as Whitefriars—as placid and prosaic a spot as can be imagined, yet still retaining a shadowy connection with the holy places of crusading fervour; and we are only shut out by the grandiose frontage of modern buildings from a view of the ancient precinct of Bridewell, where a Royal palace, with its turrets and battlements, once rose proudly from the river's brink.

But the printing houses and newspaper offices of Whitefriars have but a shadowy

connection with the ancient tenants of the spot—the brethren of the Order of Saint Mary of Mount Carmel, whose white cloaks, suggesting rather the fervid sunshine of Palestine than the misty radiance of Fleet Street, gained for them the sobriquet of the White Friars. It was a crusader—Sir Robert Gray, of Northumberland—who brought over the Carmelites to England, and established them on the grassy mount by the River Thames in the early years of the reign of King Edward the First. Already there existed near the spot a holy well—the object of a local pilgrimage—which, in Christian times, had been placed under the protection of Saint Bridget, or Bride, a virgin saint and martyr; and a humble chapel, dedicated to Saint Bride, stood in close neighbourhood to the well. And this chapel, enlarged and endowed by successive benefactors, became eventually the parochial church of Saint Bride's. Destroyed in the Great Fire, the church was rebuilt from the designs of Sir Christopher Wren, with its tall spire of many stages, that still soars above the masses of tall buildings by which it is now surrounded.

It is probable that the Templar Knights were the lords of the whole of this terrain, extending from the Temple gates to the river of Fleet, and that the Knights of Saint John inherited from them the Manor of Bridewell, and the houses in the precinct, which eventually the Prior of Saint John's, under considerable pressure from Cardinal Wolsey, conveyed to the King for the purposes of the fine new palace he was building there. The Cardinal himself was once a resident in Bridewell, when he was simply "Mr. Almoner," and dated from "my poor house at Bridewell."

So complete have been the changes in this part of London, that it is difficult to realise the old order of things. Yet the main features of hill and valley can still be traced under the mass of buildings that covers them. As our omnibus, for this journey only, turns smoothly from the Embankment, presenting Blackfriars and Ludgate from a new point of view, by the contrast between the steep descent by Norfolk Street with the dead level of New Bridge Street, we may realise that the broad roadway stretching through Ludgate Circus, and becoming Farringdon Street further on, represents the ancient estuary of the Fleet River. The actual entrance, or mouth, of the channel was narrow enough, hemmed in between the

old City wall, crowned by the turrets and towers of Baynard's Castle, and the lofty walls of the King's house in Bridewell; but the channel expanded higher up, forming a creek, that was known as Bridewell Dock, where are now the substantial, well-built, business streets, called Tudor and William Streets.

When Henry the Eighth was rebuilding and enlarging his palace of Bridewell, there was a substantial bridge existing, known as Fleet Bridge, which carried the highway from the City to Westminster. But Fleet Bridge was then a comparatively modern erection; and in earlier times, when any honest citizen would have occasion to find his way to the Temple or the Strand, he would have to push his way through the shambles of Saint Nicholas—afterwards known as Newgate Market—and so by Snow Hill, crossing the river at Holborn Bridge, where the navigable part of the channel ended, and then by Showell—now Shoe Lane—into the trackway for Westminster.

It would have been a pleasant sight, the walled City, with its gates and towers, reflected in the broad and quiet pool! But as population increased, so the Fleet lessened in volume and deteriorated in quality, till it became the unsavoury nuisance at which the wits and writers of the last two centuries were constantly railing. The nuisance lasted till 1733, when the channel was filled up and the river buried alive in a sewer. Once in the present century the buried river has made itself evident—when the underground railway was in course of construction, in a freshet the culvert burst, and almost drowned out the workmen. And a recent fire near Farringdon Station has once more brought the Fleet to light again in the form of a huge iron pipe, which crosses the same railway line; which one surveys with a kind of awe as one might the coffin of a once mighty potentate.

But when the Fleet comes to life again London will be dead, and then as a pellucid stream it may wind among the dusty heaps of ruins of this Modern Babylon, and the long expected pilgrim from New Zealand may fill his drinking-cup in some tranquil pool. And it is just possible that from the formless mounds of flimsy constructions of these latter days may then be seen protruding the gaunt foundations of the strong Norman towers which once stood sentinel over the stream.

But if, instead of speculating on the past and future, we take a turn among present

existing streets, we shall find leading out of New Bridge Street, a certain Bridewell Place, the name of which no doubt indicates the site of the old Royal palace. It is a street of warehouses and offices with basements and foundations deep down below the level of the street. At the corner stands a police station, where from down below, somewhere about on the level of the old channel, comes the rattle of the plates and dishes, if it should happen to be the policemen's dinner-hour, accompanied by fragrant smells, which are greatly preferable to the bouquet of Fleet ditch. There are cells, too, no doubt, where roisterers from Alsatia are locked up at night; and this thought suggests the other aspect of Bridewell converted from a palace into a prison, and even giving a name to lock-ups and prisons in general. And the tall spire of Saint Bride's Church, peering over adjoining buildings, seems to suggest a little explanation. It is a shame, sure—Saint Bridget was Irish, no doubt, in origin—to call your cruel prisons and penitentiaries after holy Saint Bridget and her pure, sparkling well. And old Bridewell was a terrible place, no doubt. Hogarth shows it to us in all its wretchedness and shame in one of his moral prints; and we have the evidence of worthy Pennant, who visited the prison in its palmy days: "When the door was opened by the keeper they ran towards it like so many hounds in kennel; and presented a most moving sight—about twenty young creatures, the eldest not exceeding sixteen, many of them with angelic faces, divested of every angelic expression."

But in its original dedication Bridewell was intended to forward a work of beneficence. It was a gift of that unhappy boy King Edward the Sixth, who, in his own sickness and sorrow, had a fervid, almost feverish, wish to lighten the misery of the poor. The palace of Bridewell was then empty and deserted—although the late King had expended large sums upon its buildings. These restorations had been hurried to completion that the palace might be ready to receive the newly elected Emperor, Charles the Fifth, in 1520; but for some reason or other the Emperor was lodged in the monastery of the Dominicans on the opposite side of the Fleet. But Bridewell was assigned to the Emperor's suite, and a wooden gallery was built across the channel, piercing through the old City wall, and bringing Blackfriars and Bridewell into easy communication.

Some short time after the Emperor's visit, when Wolsey's policy veered towards an alliance with France, Bridewell became the scene of the secret negotiations. The French agent, a Genoese, generally known as John Joachim, was kept close in the house of Dr. Larke, a prebendary of Saint Stephen's, at Bridewell, but not so close as to escape the knowledge of the Imperial Ambassador, who regarded the King's visits to Bridewell with much suspicion. Later again the King occupied Bridewell, with Katherine, his first Queen, when the proceedings for the Queen's divorce were going on in the hall of the neighbouring Blackfriars.

After the fall of Wolsey, there was no more use for Bridewell as a Royal residence. The Cardinal had built so much the more royally and magnificently than his master, that the King was delighted to remove bag and baggage to the Cardinal's Palace, henceforth known as Whitehall.

Those who visited the Tudor Exhibition this spring will remember the picture, by an artist of Holbein's school, representing the young King Edward in his Royal robes, delivering to the citizens of London the Royal charter, which contains the grant of his Palace and manor of Bridewell as a hospital and workhouse for the thriftless poor. Beneath this picture, on another portrait of King Edward in the old chapel of Bridewell, close by the pulpit, were inscribed these words:

This Edward, of fair memory, the Sixt,

In whom, with greatness, goodness was commixt,
Gave this Bridewell—a palace in old time—

For a chastising house of vagrant crime.

The scheme of this foundation was excellent. Vagrants and idle persons were to be reclaimed and set to work, and misery was to be assailed at its very roots by means of a kind of "Boys' Home," where vagrant children were to be brought up and trained in the knowledge of some useful calling. Art-masters were appointed, to whom the boys were apprenticed; among whom we find cloth-workers, pinners, nailers, and the representatives of many other industries, which have since deserted the metropolis.

The boys of Bridewell were for long after this a familiar sight in the City, with their blue gowns and white caps. It was part of their duty to attend all fires within the limits of Southwark and the City, and they possessed a small hand-engine, or

squirt, which was zealously wheeled to the seat of danger. But the technical school seems to have languished, and the boys, for want of judicious supervision, became unruly and insubordinate.

Yet the plan was not altogether a failure. It is recorded that "Richard Brookes, the fustian-weaver, who in 1599 took ten apprentices, in 1602 took forty." And a subsequent advocate of the technical school declares that, "grateful for the support which this art received from the manufacturers of Bridewell, the fustian-weavers of Manchester and its neighbourhood shall come forward" to testify to the advantages of such training.

But if the benevolent part of the scheme was gradually lost sight of and neglected, the penitential portion was kept up in all its vigour. Poor, wretched women were driven to their miserable tasks by rod or lash. There was whipping day, at Bridewell, when women, as well as men, were lashed, half-naked, in the presence of the governors, the chairman presiding over the scene with a hammer in his hand, with which he gave the signal to cease when he thought the culprit had had enough. Hence the cry of the poor creatures under the lash, "Oh, good Sir Robert, knock, knock!"

As for the prison itself, it acquired the sobriquet of "Lob's pound," the origin of which title is lost in the mists of criminal tradition.

Bridewell as a prison existed till 1863, when the buildings were pulled down. Some fragments of Henry's old Palace were even then existing; but the main building was of a subsequent date to the Great Fire, and presented no features of interest; so that the world is well rid of this old Bridewell and its evil memories. And yet, in a way, Bridewell still exists; it has its governors, its treasurers and officials, and rumour has it that a few cells are still existing for the benefit of unruly apprentices. For the City Chamberlain still retains his jurisdiction over the idle and refractory City apprentices, and may, and sometimes does, inflict on such, a day or two's detention in Bridewell, with a cooling diet of bread and water. And for such a purpose Bridewell is still a going concern.

But anybody acquainted with this quarter of the town a quarter of a century ago must thankfully acknowledge that everything is changed for the better. Actually, till 1870, there were gasworks

on the river frontage; and where the gasworks stood are now the handsome buildings of the City of London Schools. A new side-street is to be called John Carpenter Street; and, as everybody may not know the fitness of the name, it may be here noted that John Carpenter was that excellent Common Clerk—or Town Clerk as we should call him now—who was one of Dick Whittington's executors, who took such care in the preservation of the unique records of the City, and whose bequest for educational purposes was the nucleus of the endowment of the City of London Schools. And by John Carpenter Street one seeks the entrance to that excellent development of municipal activity—the Guildhall School of Music. Other buildings of respectable architecture occupy the river front of Bridewell and Whitefriars. Zion College, that cosy ecclesiastical club, with its fine library of Divinity—caviare to the outside world. The College of Surgeons, too, quiet and imposing, but causing a kind of shivery feeling in the breast of the young medical student as he waits for admission to its halls of examination.

But something to surprise anybody roaming about the unfinished roads and rows of hoarding that are gradually being filled up by imposing buildings, is to come upon Primrose Hill—a winding passage of warehouses that leads into Salisbury Square. Is this Primrose Hill to be taken as a pleasantry, or is it a plagiarism from that other Primrose Hill towards Hampstead, where primroses may actually have been gathered in times not very remote? But many generations must have elapsed since any one gathered primroses in Whitefriars. Yet Salisbury Square has a bright and open aspect, and when the great house was in existence, of which, no doubt, this square formed the garden, there may have been primroses in plenty grown on the pleasant bank that sloped down to the bright river's side. The great house alluded to occupied the site of Salisbury Court adjacent, and was named after the Bishops of Salisbury, whose town house it once had been. But its chief associations are derived from the literary family of Savilles who once possessed it. Here lived the statesman and poet of the Elizabethan age, the first Earl of Dorset, and here his grandson spent his early years; the wit and poet of the Court of the Restoration, that wild and rakish Lord Buckhurst, who, as Lord Dorset, is known for that famous song:

"To all ye ladies now on land," and whose satires gained him the title of

The best good man with the worst-natur'd muse.

The savour of these ancient Sacvilles still clings to the neighbourhood in the names of Dorset House and Dorset Street, and possibly Primrose Hill may owe its name to some pleasant fancy of some one of this poetic family.

Other literary memories are connected with Salisbury Square. In that recessed corner stood the printing office of Samuel Richardson, the author of "Clarissa," where Goldsmith is said to have once worked as compositor. It must have been well-known to Samuel Johnson ere yet he was burly and great, and while he could often sign himself impraneus or dinnerless. The house is still essentially in existence, but altered out of all knowledge and enlarged, as the printing and publishing office of "Lloyd's Weekly News," and in this very house, it may be remembered, Douglas Jerrold for a time occupied the editorial chair.

And Salisbury Court from a nobleman's mansion was converted into a theatre, for here it was that Sir William Davenant, under the Royal Patent, established that privileged theatre which, after sundry removals, is represented at the present day by the Covent Garden house. There had been a Whitefriars Theatre before the Civil Wars, which it is said occupied the refectory of the conventual buildings; but which had been abolished in the days of the Commonwealth.

From Salisbury Square an arched opening gives access to Saint Bride's Churchyard, which still retains a quiet, antique aspect. Here some opening with a florid architrave may lead to a wine cellar, or perhaps to a family vault, and a paved court is piled up with weather-worn stones cut with Gothic mouldings, that probably formed part of the aisles of old Saint Bride's. Milton's front door abutted, perhaps, on this same narrow passage, with the tall spire towering above, and steps that conduct the passenger to a lower level. And here Milton's first wife, Mistress Mary Powell that was, may have peered out discontentedly, and have found the place mighty dull in contrast with the gaiety of the Lincolnshire fens. It is as quiet as Lincolnshire, even now; but there is a glimpse of Fleet Street through an opening which, by the same accident that sent us down Norfolk Street just now, is actually quieter than the

churchyard, people passing on foot noiselessly along like so many ghosts, while not a vehicle or horse is to be seen or heard. There is a notable house, too, at the corner, which bears the sign of the "Old Bell," with a quiet, domestic look about its curtains and snug windows, while the old tiled roof and dormer windows peer over the more modern, but still elderly, front.

And with turning and winding here and there we come back to Whitefriars again, which one can hardly believe was ever known as Alsatia, and bore a bad character, so quiet and business-like is the scene. But at midnight you may hear the steam presses thumping away among the graves of the old Carmelites, and at two or three in the morning, when the most of the world is in bed, the place assumes a ghostly fervour and activity.

There never was much room to spare in Whitefriars, and in the sanctuary which it afforded to debtors, by favour of the ancient privileges of the Carmelites, all must have been pretty tightly packed together. And the place was quiet enough even then, perhaps—for impetuosity does not really encourage a flow of strong animal spirits—unless when the sanctuary was threatened by bailiffs, when a horn would be blown, and the whole population, at the cry of "An arrest! Fall on!" would turn out for resistance. Here came young Lord Nigel, whose fortunes, somehow, do not very strongly enlist our sympathies; and here dwelt the miser, Trappois.

Whitefriars, too, may be noted as the scene of a curious assassination in the very period of Scott's romance. It was the murder of a fencing-master, planned by Lord Sanquar, "fra' Creighton Peel," in revenge for an accidental thrust which had deprived his lordship of one of his eyes some years before. The actual perpetrators of the deed—Irvine, his lordship's page, and a retainer from his own country, named Carlyle—were hanged in Fleet Street, before Whitefriars Gate; and Lord Sanquar suffered the same fate in New Palace Yard, Westminster.

With old Bridewell the new Embankment comes to an end. We may wish that it stretched on to London Bridge, and even to the Tower; and beyond that, river and City might come into full fellowship and acquaintance. Below this point we can only find the river in bits here and there—here from a wharf, and there from

a pier—and only from the bridges is there any full, free view of its course. But such an enormous task as the completion of the great work is hardly likely to be attempted in our time.

A more crying need is an embankment on the other side of the water, which should keep the poor, crowded quarters there out of the mud and misery of periodical overflows of the river. Fine buildings would presently rise along the margin; and what a charming prospect we should have, from such an esplanade, of all the best parts of London!

Probably it is the want of this completing work, and the shabby, squalid appearance presented by poor Cinderella on the other side, that militates against the popularity of the Embankment as a public promenade, added to its general inaccessibility, and the trouble of getting to it and away from it, owing to the privileged enclosures which barricade it from the public for so large a portion of its extent.

A TUNNEL TO IRELAND.

WHETHER or not Sir Edward Watkin will succeed in carrying out his great Channel Tunnel scheme, and, whether or not the designs of certain politicians to separate Ireland from Great Britain be successful, many of us now living may witness the completion of a new link between the two islands and a domestic adaptation of Sir Edward Watkin's idea. For the proposal to construct a tunnel between Scotland and Ireland is being warmly discussed and earnestly advocated on both sides of Saint George's Channel; and although it is hardly yet within the range of practical enterprise, it is sufficiently within the range both of practicability and probability to merit description.

The project is not by any means a new one, and it has been discussed at intervals for several years past, although, perhaps, never so seriously as now. There have been, indeed, various proposals for doing away with the horrors of the "middle passage" between the two islands—horrors, however, which, according to our experience, are greatly exaggerated—and some reference to these may be first desirable.

A number of years ago a scheme received a good deal of public attention, and even some notice in Parliament, for constructing a solid roadway across the Irish Channel. The proposal was to build an embankment from the Mull of Kintyre to Fair Head on the Antrim coast, with some kind of opening, either at the centre or at fixed intervals, for the passage of vessels. The provision for shipping, however, was never thoroughly explained, and the idea never recommended itself to maritime people. Nor was its feasibility ever thoroughly examined by engineers, perhaps owing to the rough estimate that the cost of material alone could not be short of seventy millions sterling. Such a possible expenditure naturally put the scheme out of court altogether.

Then, after this, there was a proposal to throw a bridge across, substantial enough for railway purposes. When we look at the Forth Bridge one hesitates to say that an Irish Channel Bridge is an impossibility; and every one knows that a bridge between England and France has been several times projected, and even drafted in detail. But even if the depth of water and the strength of the currents would allow of a bridge being built between the nearest points of Scotland and Ireland, the cost of it, on the basis of the cost of the Forth Bridge, would not be less than thirty or forty millions sterling, which puts this scheme also out of court.

Still more recently a proposal originated in Belfast for a submerged tubular-bridge. The author of this scheme was a Mr. Martin, who proposed to sink a tube at a depth of sixty feet below the surface, from Portpatrick to Donaghadee, a distance of twenty-two miles from land to land. The tube was to be of steel plates, coated on the outside with some composition to prevent corrosion. It was to be either circular or elliptical in form, and to enclose an inner tube of rectangular form, in which the roadway was to be laid. The difficulty of construction was got over very ingeniously. The tube was to be built in lengths of four hundred feet, floated out to position like the caissons for the Forth Bridge, and then sunk to the required depth. There was some elaborate machinery for joining the lengths together under water, and the whole structure was to be kept in position by huge chains and anchors. There was to be an arrangement of doors at intervals of five hundred feet, which could be closed in case of emergency,

so as to form separate water-tight compartments, and ventilation was to be provided on some self-acting principle by the passage of the trains. These last were to be propelled either by electricity or compressed air, and so fitted that an inrush of water would drive them out of the tube at either end. The estimated cost of this ingenious scheme was to be five and a quarter millions sterling.

It omitted, however, to take into account, or, at all events, to sufficiently explain away, certain difficulties. There would be, first of all, the extreme difficulty, if not impossibility, of towing out such huge lengths of hollow tubing, and sinking them in the exact place, and at the exact depth required for each section, in an open sea-way exposed to the violent action of the tides and winds. There would be, in the next place, the extreme difficulty, if not impossibility, of adjusting ties and anchors to the various depths and bottoms in such a way as to secure absolute rigidity of a structure in mid-water. And the inventor does not seem to have taken into consideration the probable effect upon a continuous line of twenty-two miles of comparatively narrow tubing, of the daily tidal currents, which run with great force.

Thus, even if it could be constructed, there is very great doubt if such a submerged tubular-bridge could be preserved free from curvatures which would be fatal to the passage of trains.

All these projects, however, have been superseded by the Tunnel scheme, which has received considerable impetus from the completion of the Mersey and Severn tunnels. There are four distinct routes proposed, which we will describe in turn.

The first, and, if we mistake not, the earliest in date, is that which takes the shortest distance between the islands. If a map be consulted, it will be seen that the nearest points are the extreme end of the Mull of Kintyre, in Scotland, and Tor Head, on the north-east coast of County Antrim. From Kintyre to Cushendun is just fourteen and a half miles in a straight line, and this is the line proposed by Messrs. W. Scott and L. L. Macassey. This would be the length of their sea-tunnel, but there would have to be some tunnelling on land as well, making the total length of the tunnel about twenty-four miles. This tunnel would be on a gradient of about one in sixty, and would be constructed for a double line of rails.

An obvious objection to this route is that there are at present no connecting railways at either end. To bring the tunnel within the railway system of the United Kingdom would involve the construction of a line from Crianlarich, on the new West Highland Railway, round by Inverary and Campbeltown to the Mull of Kintyre—a distance of about one hundred miles. On the other side, a railway of about twenty-four miles to connect with the Belfast railway at Larne, and another branch of twenty miles to complete the connection with Londonderry, would be necessary. Even with these affiliated railways, the route would be a very roundabout one for a traveller from London or the Midlands to Belfast. But as against this, it is claimed that the advantage of being able to complete the whole journey without moving out of a comfortable railway carriage, would be regarded as ample compensation by many, who would rather travel any distance by land than even for a couple of hours by sea. As a matter of fact, many people from London and the South prefer the long railway-ride and short sea-passage by Stranraer, to the shorter railway-ride and longer sea-passage by Holyhead.

The Kintyre and Antrim line is recommended in that it would give the shortest sea-tunnel it is possible to make; that being the shortest, it would be the soonest made; and that, for the same reason, it would require less capital than either of the other proposed routes. At the estimated basis of three hundred thousand pounds per mile, this tunnel would cost six million four hundred and eighty thousand pounds, while the connecting railways would cost about one million one hundred thousand pounds more—say in all about seven million five hundred and eighty thousand pounds.

The next shortest line proposed is between Portpatrick, in Wigtonshire, and Donaghadee, in County Down. This is at present the shortest sea-passage, and both termini have direct railway connection with the rest of the country. The distance across is twenty-two miles, and it is believed that the bed of the Channel rests upon the Silurian system of rocks, which are well adapted for tunnelling, inasmuch as they are compact and do not allow of much percolation of water. A disadvantage of this route is that the Channel is very deep, extending in some places to nine hundred feet, and in order to allow for that depression the

tunnel would have to be sunk with very steep gradients. An alternative would be to prolong the tunnel to a considerable distance inland on either side, so as to get easier gradients; but this would involve about eighteen miles of further excavation, making the total length of tunnel forty miles. Owing to the depth of this tunnel, the basis of cost is assumed at four hundred thousand pounds per mile, at least, which would give a total of sixteen millions sterling.

Last year Mr. F. W. McCullough, C.E., proposed a variation on this line, taking the tunnel from Portpatrick to the Antrim shore, instead of to Donaghadee. By this route, he got a maximum sea-depth of six hundred and fifty feet, which would permit of a gradient of one in fifty-two—the sea-tunnel to be twenty-three and a half miles, and the land approaches three and a half miles, in all twenty-seven miles. The estimate of this tunnel was seven millions; but on the basis of three hundred thousand pounds per mile taken in the other cases, it would rather exceed eight millions sterling. It is claimed for this route that, while offering the shortest but one crossing with good gradients, it would be more conveniently situated for railway connections than any of the other routes.

Yet another proposal is that of Mr. Barton, C.E., of Dundalk, who seems to have gone more thoroughly into the geological question than any one else. He proposes a line from Wierston Hill, in Wigtonshire—north of Portpatrick—to Island Magee, which separates Larne Lough from the Channel. The feature of this scheme is, that the tunnel is not on a straight line, but after going out in a north-westerly direction from the Scotch coast for a few miles, turns at a sharp angle, and runs south-west to the Irish coast. The object of this deflection is to avoid the deep pools, and secure a maximum depth of water to be passed under of about five hundred feet. The length of this tunnel would be twenty-six and a half miles, and the land approaches would bring up the total excavation to thirty-three miles, while the gradient would be only one in seventy-five.

A careful examination of the sea-bed for some distance from the shore at each end, has afforded some knowledge of the material to be dealt with; and it is upon this knowledge that an estimate was framed of two hundred thousand pounds per mile for tunnelling. But for other

expenses and contingencies, it has been thought more prudent to assume a probable cost of three hundred thousand pounds per mile on all the lines, except the Donaghadee route, which, as has been said, presents special difficulties which increase the cost. Mr. Barton's scheme, therefore, would cost about ten millions sterling.

These, then, are the main points of the several proposals, and it is for experts to decide which is the best. In any case, the difficulties are great, and it cannot be positively assumed that they are surmountable, for nothing of exactly the same kind has ever yet been attempted—excepting, of course, the English Channel Tunnel, which was begun in a way only to be abandoned, or suspended.

Of course, much advance has been made in the art of subaqueous—as of land—tunnelling since the Thames Tunnel was made. This was begun sixty-five years ago; is only thirteen hundred feet long; and took eighteen years to build. The Mersey Tunnel is, with approaches, about four and a half miles long, and the roof of it is thirty feet below the bed of the river. It was found not difficult to make, and cost altogether one million two hundred and fifty thousand pounds; the subaqueous portion, however—about a mile—cost only one hundred and forty thousand eight hundred pounds. The Severn Tunnel is about four miles long, and cost about five hundred thousand pounds per mile. As some two miles of this are subaqueous, the Severn Tunnel is the longest of the kind in the world.

Of land tunnels, the Saint Gothard is the longest—nearly nine and a half miles—and it cost about two hundred and fifty thousand pounds per mile. The Mont Cenis Tunnel, which is about eight miles long, cost close upon four hundred thousand pounds per mile; while the Arlberg Tunnel, which is six and a half miles long, cost only one hundred and ninety thousand pounds per mile. Of these three, the last is the most recent of construction, and was the cheapest; and there seems little doubt that this kind of work has become very much more manageable by engineers at moderate cost than it was twenty years ago.

The Thames Tunnel, for instance, which absorbed about half a million pounds, could probably have been constructed to-day for a fourth of that sum. Still, the recent story of the Severn Tunnel shows

that little can be taken for granted in subaqueous burrowing. The distance between the top of the Severn Tunnel and the bed of the river is only forty feet; but in the case of the Irish Tunnels a distance of one hundred and twenty feet is proposed.

A few particulars may be given to show the difference in time which might be saved by a tunnel between Scotland and Ireland. At present, the journey from London to Belfast, via Larne and Stranraer, occupies fourteen and a half hours. By the Island Magee Tunnel it would occupy eleven hours; by the Portpatrick Tunnel, ten and a half hours; and by the Kintyre Tunnel, thirteen hours. From Manchester to Belfast, via Fleetwood, at present takes ten and a half hours; by the three tunnels just named, the journey would be done in seven and a quarter, seven, and nine and a half hours respectively. From Leeds to Belfast takes fourteen and a half hours by Barrow and ten hours by Larne; by the three tunnels, it would take six and a half, six and a half, and nine and a quarter hours, respectively. Passengers to and from Birmingham would save from three to six hours; and the journey to and from Edinburgh and Glasgow would be shortened in time by about one-half by any one of the proposed tunnels. Corresponding advantages would be gained with regard to other towns in the north of Ireland, and some saving of time would also be effected in the passage between English and Scotch towns and Dublin and the South, but of course not to the same extent. The great attraction to most people, no doubt, would be the avoidance of a rough sea-passage.

If it be asked if a tunnel on any one of the proposed lines would pay, we feel compelled to say that we do not think it would. Taking even the lowest estimate of cost—that of the Kintyre Tunnel, viz., six and a half million pounds—it is calculated that a traffic would be required to yield about two hundred and fifteen pounds per mile per week in order to pay the cost of maintenance, pumping, ventilation, etc., and an interest of three per cent. per annum on the capital. If the average earnings of the English, Scotch, and Irish railways be looked at, it will be seen it is hopeless to expect any such return, however the traffic between the two countries may develop.

Whether it might pay the allied railway companies, indirectly, to combine and

assist in the construction of a tunnel, as three great railways did in the case of the Forth Bridge, or whether it would be an advantage to the State—politically, socially, and economically—to aid the project by a grant of the public funds, are matters which may admit of conjecture, but hardly of discussion here.

TRIFLES.

SOME one, upon being asked, "What is a genius?" replied, "A being who pays attention to trifles."

This surely ought to be encouraging to most of us. It gives us a chance of greatness by the back stairs, of which, perhaps, we had not before so much as an inkling. I know well that there are dark-browed and profound persons who deem the state of the genius the most undesirable that can be discovered among the sons and daughters of men. They ought, however, to add a word to this declaration—the word "unappreciated." The "unappreciated genius" may indeed have but a sorry time of it; and especially if, as is more than probable, he have the bump of self-esteem largely developed. He has a knack of eating out his own heart in the mightiness of his yearning for that meal which the world alone can offer him; and this must be a very unsatisfactory sort of repast, whether it be occasional only or unintermittent.

Without going quite so far as the above-mentioned definer of "genius," one may yet be willing to concede that trifles are somewhat underrated by the majority of us. Ask your cook, if he or she be an accomplished person, with a due reverence for his or her high calling, what are the most serious items in the treasury of the kitchen. Ten to one the answer will be, the seasonings or the sauces. These really are only the accidents of the feast, and yet they make or mar it.

It is much the same everywhere: take care of the pence, and the pounds will look after themselves.

At first sight, it might appear of small importance under what auspices a man comes into the world. We have been told over and over again that the privilege of mere living is so considerable that it matters little who or what our parents are. And yet, contrast the condition of the man who has been born into life as the son of a lord with the condition of the man who sees the light for the first time in

a White-chapel alley. No matter; it is a trifle, our friends would say. But, good heavens, what a trifle!

Most of us have been bored to death repeatedly by the kindly insistence of parents and tutors upon the necessity of being polite, addressing our superiors with as much of that excellent "reverence"—adored of Mr. Ra-kin—as we can conjure up within us, paying attention to details of raiment, personal appearance, and so forth. These various points do not seem to us, it may be, worth all the emphasis they get. And yet they are. Whether for love-making, or success in life, or to secure that esteem of the world, which is reckoned one of the best prizes going, they are almost as essential as the virtues—perhaps you will say the vices—of which they are the fringe.

Very few men are made by nature so perfectly irresistible that they can venture to assail a maiden heart unaided by certain of these trifling graces. On the other hand, to borrow the words of Parini: "How often have I seen a lady made happy by the tender of a single pin by her thoughtful squire in a time of need."

Some centuries ago, a man might cut his way to creditable renown much as a dog runs at a bone. But we have changed that in no small degree. Strategy, finesse, the interweaving of one trifle upon another—these are the methods of our times. We don't mature so fast as our ancestors. They married at fourteen or fifteen, were gallant knights long ere they were of age, and, more often than not, came to an abrupt end at about the time when we have some chance of airing our abilities before the eyes of our fellow-men. Thanks to civilisation—which is nothing but the accumulation of one trifle upon another—and the various industrial and other inventions—all proceeding from trifling observations and discoveries—we live longer, and more healthily, and die of euthanasia at the right moment. At least, that is what would happen according to the express wish of civilisation itself, if a number of tiresome trifles, in the guise of overcrowding, over-competition, and international enmities did not stop the way.

A straw, we all know, is sufficient to show the direction of the wind. A look is not in itself a very prodigious exercise of the power or will that is in us. We look at things and people unconsciously, just because we have eyes and they are objects

within the range of our vision. But what a myriad of tragic and happy events have been the outcome of merely this interchange of eyes and eyes! There is no need to call in the aid of hypnotism to enforce our position. Every heart that has loved another heart, or the outward robe of it, knows that this trivial turn of an eye, with perhaps the unspoken word that lingers in its expression, has had more effect than the news that the planet Saturn had suddenly disappeared from the empyrean would have had. If looks are trifles, then are trifles the small end of the telescope, which makes a child as big as an elephant.

We need not resuscitate Talleyrand's maxim to remind us further of the value or worthlessness of speech as an expression of opinion. Tone, which is the epidermis of speech, is commonly reckoned a small matter. Yet, is it such? When the husband, upon leaving the house, announces to his wife: "I'm not coming home to-night," it depends very much indeed upon his tone whether it affects the good soul, his spouse, much or little. There are about fifty thousand ways of putting that little question upon which such important personal interests depend: "Will you be my wife?" even as the "No" in reply may have about fifty thousand gradations between the real positive "No" and the "Yes," which appears to be its exact opposite. Is it a trifle if she droops her eyelids, and there is a faint tremor in her voice as she gives you your cup of ice?

That ridiculous little snub or no-nosed mortal which the young lady just referred to by-and-by presents to you as something after your own likeness may surely be regarded as a trifle, in a world which has more than a thousand million full-grown articles of the kind. But tarry a while. It is not a trifle to you, even now; and by-and-by it may become a man, even as the little brook high up among the moors of the mountain anon has a body a mile broad, and strong enough to make an impact upon the sea where it enters it.

Those immortal words which, on January the second, 1667, Samuel Pepye, Esquire, recorded in that precious diary of his: "My wife up, and with Mrs. Pen to walk in the fields to frost-bite themselves," do not, on the surface, teach us very much about the writer and his wife; but by trying them a little upon the tongue, we learn that Mr. Pepys did not think much of early rising in the winter. We learn

further that he ventured to think his wife somewhat foolish to indulge in so robust a constitutional. He does not say this outright, but he is satirical; and who can say of what depths of iniquity the man who writes ironically of his wife in his diary is really capable?

In looking back on one's past career with a discerning eye, one is almost certain to perceive that one or more of the sensational phases of one's life have been the work of trifles, as small in seeming as the mustard seed whence the tree proceeds.

The artist West tells us that a kiss from his mother made him a painter. Here, of course, the kiss was, so to speak, the "afflatus" or inspiration which all in a moment kindled the inborn capacity within the man. One cannot pass on the recipe as warrantable for general use. Else the Royal Academy would have to be expanded as far as Westminster Abbey, and blank walls would become the fashion in our houses.

Nevertheless, this kiss upon the lips of West, the artist in embryo, may run with our text.

Much more notable is one's introduction in early manhood to one or other of those remarkable women who may be found—though perhaps with difficulty—among the mass of their sex, like a diamond of the first water in the midst of a setting of indifferent paste.

It is but a chance word that does the business.

"Oh, by the way, Mrs. —, may I introduce to you Mr. Bartholomew Guy? He has so often spoken of you with——"

A bow here, a bow there, a smile, and a phrase or two; and then Mr. Bartholomew Guy goes on his way rejoicing. There is something about the lady that, in a moment, precipitates the dross of Mr. Guy's common human nature, or quickens into sudden activity a bunch of powers of which formerly he had little or no conception. If this formal acquaintanceship proceeds to intimacy, why, then Mr. Guy may congratulate himself as much as if an angel from heaven were to descend and take him by the hand for the rest of his pilgrimage. Nay, he may be advanced more by the woman than by the angel. For the one is an angel on earth—untranslated; and she has, or may have, the gift of guiding him to the goal of human distinction, while at the same time she shields him from the errors and weaknesses which hum round about his head

and his heart like the arrows in a battle of the fourteenth century.

"The great majority of men exist, but do not live, like Italy in the last century. The power of the passions, the force of the will, the creative energy of the imagination—these make life, and reveal to us a world of which the million are entirely ignorant. You have been fortunate in your youth to have become acquainted with a great woman. It develops all a man's powers, and gives him a thousand talents."

So Disraeli makes his Princess of Tivoli talk to Lothair. And the lady's statement may be received with the regard that is due to all truthful sayings.

Do you ever consider the value of buttons on your coat? Not their intrinsic value; for that, unless you are a connoisseur in buttons, and wear them of gold or silver, is not likely to be very great. No; I refer to their possible protective power. A maniac may strike at you with a knife, or your best friend, in a moment of tury, like madness, may fire his revolver at you. 'Tis possible the lowly button may intervene between you and death, and save you. It has often happened. Why may it not happen in your case? I have heard of a man who carried a small, unobtrusive Prayer-book in his breast-pocket as a perennial cuirass for his heart in such an emergency as this. A Prayer book may be better than a button in one respect; but there are other parts of your body besides your heart in which it would be inconvenient to receive a bullet; and, besides, the buttons are unconscious shields.

Men who write and paint know how to appreciate trifles better than most other men. They are professional observers, and very little observation teaches them that effect—whether in books or on canvas—depends upon a study of detail, first of all. Michael Angelo would not have given us such admirable representations of muscular human beings had he not in the beginning studied the muscles and skeleton which underlie the human exterior.

The French novelists, in particular, are born worshippers of the trivial; not for its own sake, but because they realise so thoroughly that the dramas of which they are the creators have to be built upon the petty records in their note-books. Daudet and Zola may be said to go abroad in the world with eyes in every part of them. A tone, a mannerism, a peculiarity of person:

these are what they are eager to seize and appropriate, even as, on the other hand, they give us living pictures of the commonplace by their startling genius for reproducing them in every superficial essential, due to the industry with which memory and the pocket-book are brought into alliance.

It may, indeed, further be said, almost axiomatically, that literary work is all mere expansion from small cores; either an idea, or a fact, or a single observation made in the tenth part of a second. The ambitious person who goes gaping through the world assuring himself that as soon as he has a spare month or two that he can call his own entirely, he will sit down and write something which will make publishers fall down and worship him, may be bidden to get disillusioned as fast as possible. Off-and work of that kind is likely to be of the nature of the soap-bubbles which little boys blow with a clay pipe and a bowl of suds. They are remarkable creations; but a snap of the finger and they are gone. They don't stand any test whatsoever. A builder might as well think to make his house by having waggon-loads of bricks, and sand, and mortar, all heaped together, in the middle of the formless pile of which he by-and-by burrows or digs a hole more or less artistic, which he calls a house.

Which would you feel the more confidence in—a doctor who never prescribed for you without making a rigorous examination of you, and especially in the part which you believed to be unwell; or a physician who, with a flourish of the hand, after a single glance at your tongue, bade you "take this, in doses, three times a day," for the next week or month?

It is certainly tiresome to be tested by the various "scopes" with which the medical man assumes to be able to reckon up the condition of one's vitals; but it is just as well to yield to the ordeal rather than pour wash into one's stomach in obedience to the great man who scorns to put you to any test. Dr. Sangrado was, I doubt not, a most self-important gentleman, who seldom troubled his visitors to say "ninety-nine," and would have viewed the various modern inventions in the aid of chirurgery as so many oblique insults to himself. Like a multitude of his fellow-creatures, he preferred the majesty of general principles to the fatigue of minute investigation. And so he went through the world with a certain amount of honour, supported upon

either hand by the cupping-glasses and the pestle. This excellent gentleman was of the order of licensed slaughtermen, who do not think of nipping a disease in the bud. "Wait a while," they say, "that one may judge more exactly about it." And only when the patient is in a raging fever do they send for the leeches to help them to abate it.

We know what an eye for incidents upon which he could found conjectures Columbus had. The ordinary mariner of his day would have sung or rioted his time away, and never given a single unnecessary thought to the work that was required of him. But Columbus was different; and so in the last days of his tour of discovery, when even he himself was a quarter disposed to turn back and side with his men in their discontent at the barrenness of the voyage, he could bring forward that strong muster of trifling observations which, together, meant America: "You know we have for several days been able to fathom; and the nature of the material brought up by the lead seems to me auspicious. The clouds about the sun towards evening are of a different form and colour to what they were a few days ago. The atmosphere, as you can feel, is warmer and softer than it was. The wind no longer blows with the same force, nor in so straightforward and unwavering a manner; it is inclined to hesitate and change, as though broken by some impediment. To these signs, add that of the piece of cane we discovered floating in the sea, which bore marks of having been recently severed; and the little branch of a tree with fresh red berries upon it; besides, the swarms of birds that pass over us, though they have deceived us before, are now so frequent and vast, that I think there must be some special reason for their appearance. . . . In short, all these omens together make me very hopeful and expectant."

This is about the best possible illustration of the plea that a genius is a man who pays attention to trifles. It is not wholly an acceptable plea; but it has truth enough in it to make us willing to shake hands with it.

It is hard to say what is, and what is not a trifle; for what is trifling to you may be important to me, and what I smile at may be a source of tears to you. And besides, what is admittedly a small thing in itself may, upon occasion, do giant's work. A tiny clot of blood in the veins will kill

a man as effectually as the blow of a steam hammer. Napoleon, though a small man, as men go, upset our world for a score of years, and made hundreds of thousands of wives widows.

The truth is, I suppose, that nothing is really trifling, or else that everything is trifling. Looking from the sun towards our globe, it would seem absurd if any one were to lament the sudden disappearance of the earth from the universe :

Life is but a day,
A fragile dewdrop on its perilous way
From a tree's summit.

Yet if I, a single mortal on this little sphere, were to lose the forefinger of the hand which writes these lines, I should think it no trifle.

It is the standpoint that seems to justify the judgement, one way or the other.

THE TREVERTON MARRIAGE.

A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

CHAPTER V.

SURELY some foreboding of evil should have seized Helena that night as she sat alone at one of the long, old-fashioned windows of the "Bath Hotel," looking at deserted Piccadilly, almost as lonely as the Northern moor, while the same sun cast slant golden rays upon her white, angry face. Was it a supernatural warning of the catastrophe which, at that very moment, had happened on the moor, that made her look like a very Judith, with her stern-set mouth, and her dark eyes burning with wrath? She looked as if she were thirsting for blood; but it was not for Beatrix Lyon's, nor yet for her father's—not even for Lord Monkchester's, though she was seriously displeased with him; only for the blood of the member of the Government which had ordered the *Chargé d'Affaires* off to Chimborazo at once, with just time to pack a portmanteau. There had been some serious misunderstanding with the Republic—somebody had asked an aspiring opposition President to tea. Lord Monkchester must go at once to smooth matters over, and assure the President "in case" that Her Britannic Majesty not only had not suggested the tea, much less sent the crumpets ready buttered from Balmoral, but heartily disapproved of the entertainment.

If her lover had given her any encouragement whatever, Helena would have packed her biggest dress-basket and gone with him, leaving her trousseau to follow; but he had so completely accepted the impossibility of her society at such short notice, that pride would not have allowed her to offer it. She must follow in a month or thereabouts with her gowns, and be married at the chapel of the British Legation, and that was quite annoying enough. So there was real trouble enough in her mind to shut out any chance of foreboding creeping in—except the foreboding that the marriage and the embassy might all vanish like the airy fabric of a dream.

But she really would not return to Oswaldburn like a bad shilling; she hated London, though she must stay there a little longer to look after her frocks. They were all promised for a fortnight hence, when she should have been married. When the fortnight was over, since her aunt could not be spared longer from home than the terms of the original contract had stipulated, Helena would go with her to Scotland. She could sail just as well from Glasgow. Her father, of course, would join her at Carlaurie, only too happy at the extension of time granted, though he would fully appreciate the absurd fuss which had been made about the tea-party—a veritable storm in a tea-cup; and would sympathise with the wanton cruelty, worthy of a mediæval Government, that sacrificed the most important personal matters to its tyrannous whims and mountain-out-of-molehill diplomacy. She wrote a telegram and despatched it. She knew the Monkchester office closed at eight; but she could not believe that a telegram of such importance should wait like a mere business message. She stayed in the hotel expecting her answer; at any rate, she had an excuse for not going with Lady Carlaurie to see one of the stop-gap plays with which London is regaled in August. But no answer came that night.

Lady Carlaurie returned at half-past eleven, bored to death, and found Helena still sitting up in the amiable mood engendered by four hours of solitude, following upon the excitement of a sudden and hope-shattering farewell; four hours spent in waiting for a telegram that never came, in brooding over the deep injury done her by a selfish, futile Minister, and in feeling herself neglected and slighted by all the world, even by her father.

There was not even an answer next

morning, though she calculated that even the disobliging and disrespectful Monkchester post office must have sent the telegram out by then, and could have despatched the answer long before breakfast-time. Then she said to her aunt, little guessing:

"Something must have happened."

The answer came, at noon:

"Yours received. Go to Carlaurie certainly; very busy; will write by next post."

Indeed, poor Sir Everard was hardly in a pleasanter frame of mind than his daughter; as much disappointed, feeling as resentful against the Government and Lord Monkchester, and the idiotic Presidents of all the Western Republics. From a height as high of seemingly assured happiness he, too, had fallen into a gulf of perplexity, foreboding, and despair.

Last night he had been so happy; he told himself it was for the first time in his life that he had tasted the very fulness of life's sweetness. All had been arranged for his good. Helena, who might have been annoyed at his marriage, was going so far away—it could not affect her so as to make her very angry—and she was going so soon that there was no need to disturb her mind, which had so many cares upon it just now, by telling her of his own marriage as yet. He was not in the least afraid of Helena, he said to himself, with an indulgent smile—and he ought to have known best—but he felt deeply reluctant to displease her, and to wound her affection. It was most fortunate, too, that his news would not be anticipated by gossip—for she had no correspondents at Oswaldburn—and be worse received because of untimeliness.

He rode home quickly after leaving his betrothed at her bowery cottage door. It was hard to leave her, but night was drawing in; the afterglow redly flooded the sky; the hills blackened in the west. Knowledge of the world told him that until she was all his own he must see less of her, since he had won her. There must be no handle given to gossip; the future Lady Treverton must be like Cæsar's wife—nay, treated with the distant, though loving, reverence given to a saint. She was alone, her youth and innocence virtually unprotected in that solitary cottage; until he had found a chaperon for her, he must deny himself much of her dear society.

But where should a chaperon be found

—one who, though of immaculate honour, and delicate sympathy and tact, would be able to keep the secret, and not betray them, till Helena was on her way to Chimborazo?

Lady Carlaurie crossed his mind for a moment, to be dismissed. Had she not consented to take care of Helena in London at this time of year only under powerful representations of duty owed to a motherless niece? She was not Beatrix's aunt—

Beatrix's aunt! Of course there must be such a person. How foolish not to have thought of it! She was the proper chaperon. It was absurd not to have thought of her before; but he was so accustomed to think of Beatrix as a solitary creature, as free of encumbrance in the shape of relations as Melchisedec, King of Salem. He would ask her to-morrow if she had not an aunt she could lay her hand on for the present emergency.

Then wonder began to wake faintly within him as to his future relatives-in-law. His musings were interrupted by arrival at home, by having to answer the amazement of the groom who took his hardly-riden horse; the mild reproach in the butler's eye, reminding him of the injury done to his waiting dinner. Then there was the hurry of dressing under the consciousness of an angry cook; and a spoilt dinner to eat, with such an appetite, brought from his moorland gallop, that he believed he could have devoured ashes. Not until he was left alone after dinner had he time for careful reflection.

He loved Beatrix as ardently as if he had been twenty-seven, and was as fully determined that, for no earthly consideration, would he give her up: for none on his side, such as Helena's wrath; for none on hers, such as unpleasant relations. In fact, he was so fully satisfied of the real advantage to Helena in the end to have a step-mother, that he did his best to put aside any qualms on that score; he was so confident, not only in Beatrix's sweetness and goodness, but in her perfect breeding, that he took all her relations on trust, and at the same time felt certain that, whatever they might be, lowly, vulgar, or even vicious, they could make no difference whatever to her perfect desirableness as a wife. They could only be as specks in the sun.

Then, having settled these doubtful matters in his mind, he gave himself up to thinking of what was real and true;

of the gracious presence he would bring to the old house; the cultivated companion who would share his highest thoughts; the tender, reverent love that would be so sweet after the rather domineering affection of his daughter! He smiled. Dear Helena! he had certainly made something of a tyrant of her. It was all his own doing. He wondered how Monkchester would like it, though. Monkchester had been very much in love, but he had a will of his own. He was an intensely proud man, too, and would not easily submit to taking the second place in his own house or in society.

It certainly was a splendid match for Helena, setting aside the "embassy." The Monkchester barony dated from the Wars of the Roses, and had become a viscounty at the Restoration. The Lords of Monkchester had intermarried with the greatest families in the English and Scottish peerages, and even had drops of the Royal blood of England and France trickling along their veins.

The Trevertons were of old Cornish stock originally, but had been settled at Oswaldburn since Elizabeth had given some Church lands, left over from the spoliated Abbey of Monkchester, to the head of a younger branch of the family, whom her successor had created a baronet of his first batch. They, too, had held their heads very high in the county, and kept their blood free of vulgar taint. Once, not very long ago, there had been a slip made. The Treverton blood had just escaped pollution through the mad folly of a boy. "But, thank Heaven, she had no children," Sir Everard breathed, in pious thanksgiving, as he thought of it, and of the permanent disgrace so providentially averted from his house—the indelible taint their blood might have suffered.

As he reclined there by the open window, his wine at his elbow, his cigar between his fine, thin lips, his small, grey head leaning luxuriously against the cushion that made the stately oak chair the very perfection of easy comfort, he felt himself the happiest man in the world. The knowledge of how seeming chance had favoured him in everything that might so easily have thwarted, if not overthrown, all his wishes, gave the crowning sense of full completeness to his happiness. He looked out upon the life opened before him, and youth was his again, all vigorous hope and dauntless confidence. Youth had left him early—so much earlier than

it leaves other men; it was like the payment of a debt twenty-six years owing, that it should come back now. He had caught up the thread of life where he dropped it a quarter of a century ago, and all the joyful hope of twenty-one was his.

Next morning he awoke to the same glad hope, the same young delight in life. He would ride over to the cottage after breakfast: first, to assure himself that Beatrix and her love were real, and that she had not forgotten him and their engagement; secondly, to suggest the chaperon. Alas! for the sudden clouding over of the fairest summer morning. Before he had finished dressing Helena's telegram was brought to him.

After a brief fury of wrath against the Foreign Office, a thrill of consternation at the threatened upset of his plans, the cool experience of forty-seven came to the rescue of the angry despair of twenty-one. Helena was going to Carlaurie, not coming to Oswaldburn. If not so safely winging her way to the other side of the globe, she would at least be well out of sight at the remotest corner of the sister kingdom. She would be with sensible people, who would show her the matter in its true light, should he determine to tell her of his marriage—people who had themselves experienced much in the same line, since Lord Carlaurie had been married three times, and Lady Carlaurie twice, and between them they had five families, whose ages varied from five to forty-five, all living in perfect harmony, more or less, together. He must of course tell Helena the truth now, as soon as possible; or at least as soon as convenient. It was due not only to her right as a daughter, but to Beatrix, who must not have the stigma of secrecy, and therefore of implied shame, cast upon her. He would write to Helena that afternoon; by then he would have settled the chaperon question with Beatrix, and in settling it have learned facts about her family that would not be so indifferent to Helena and the Carlauries as they were to himself.

He despatched the telegram and rode over to the cottage. It was a very hot morning, and Beatrix had put on a white dress. How pure and good she looked, with such a sweet blush on her delicately rounded cheeks, as she raised her happy eyes from a pile of letters she was answering to receive his rapturous greeting!

He glanced rather uneasily at the letters.

He had not considered how side-winds might blow the news to Helena by means of the unknown relations to whom Beatrix would naturally and properly write announcing her engagement. For all he knew, Helena might meet some of those unknowns in London or Scotland, and all at once the necessity he had been keeping back forced itself upon him; Helena must not know of the marriage till a time of safety—either till she was safely out of the way, or until the marriage was an accomplished fact. Three hundred miles off, all the Carlsburys, even iron chains, could not hold her back from swooping down upon him, and forbidding the banns. How could the peace be kept? Was ever a man in such a predicament? He could not insult Beatrix by forbidding her to mention their engagement, and yet—

"I see you are writing to your people," he observed. "What will they say to it?"

"I haven't a relation in the world to tell," she answered, reddening painfully at the shame of such a confession, and looking intensely anxious to see how he took it. Would he despise her, cast her off?

"No relations!" he exclaimed in dismay, thinking of the harmless necessary aunt required.

"It seems very strange, does it not?" she went on, with a nervous laugh. "The fact is, my father and I were too poor for our relations. Sir Julius Lyon, of Winterly, was his first cousin," reddening again and drooping her eyes, her voice faltering as she claimed the relationship she had been too proud to claim before, and shrinking at the thought that Sir Julius might be a friend of Sir Everard's, and refuse to acknowledge her. "We were poor; my mother was a nursery governess. My father ran away with her. She was an orphan, brought up in a sisterhood."

This all came in a succession of jerks, her voice faltering more and more as she watched how his face became graver and graver. Then she stopped altogether, and her anxious eyes said what her proud lips refused to say.

"Do you think I am not good enough for you? Do you repent? Oh! my love, don't repent now, or it will kill me."

But repentance was the last idea that could have entered his mind—he was thinking:

"It is more impossible than I believed that Lena should know. She will work upon Beatrix herself. She will act, dear girl,

with the best intentions, for the good of the family. She will be frantic at the idea of the nursery governess. Why, she treats Mrs. Dudley hardly any better than Johnstone because she has been a governess; and yet Mrs. Dudley's father was an officer of distinction, and her mother was a Meredith, and her governessing, I believe, was of a very first-class sort. She is a clever woman, though Lena cannot bear her; she will be the first to find us out, and to carry the news to Lena out of sheer spite. She is a serious obstacle in our way. I see nothing for it but for Beatrix to leave the neighbourhood till matters are settled."

"A penny for your thoughts," said Beatrix, at last, trying to speak lightly.

He started, and said, apologetically:

"I beg your pardon; I was thinking what a pity you have no aunt to come to you; I cannot bear the idea of your living here alone. I could see you so much oftener if there were a duenna in the background, you see."

"Why, here comes Mrs. Dudley, a 'deux ex machina!'" cried Beatrix, feeling put out that he should not be satisfied with a way of life that satisfied her, and childishly pleased that his tiresome wish for a chaperon had called up this intrusive spirit from the vasty deep.

Now she would be chaperoned, and he should see how he liked the idea in its realisation.

"It is intolerable!" cried Sir Everard, annoyed past caution. "She will tell the whole country-side."

"And do you wish it to be kept secret?" she said.

Her voice changed to sudden ice; her soft eyes turned to angry lightnings; her graceful figure stiffened into rigid pride.

"My darling!" he cried, penitently, feeling at the same time relieved that a way had been made through which full confidence might burst the fetters of delicate reticence; "never was man so proud as I that I have won you. But, Beatrix, I have a confession to make"—his eyes twinkled in self-mockery—"and I throw myself upon your honour that you will not take unfair advantage of it afterwards, when you have me at your mercy. I am terribly henpecked. I have a daughter who claims the full possession of me, who will be very, very angry to find she is no longer first. You must excuse her that she loves me too much and too jealously. Yes, I admit it is unfair, seeing she is going to be married herself; but women—several

of them, at least—are not quite fair in love and war. It is trying, perhaps, to a grown-up girl to have a step-mother brought to her rather younger than herself."

"Yes, I quite see that."

"She will be dreadfully hurt. I hoped she would have been married so soon, and gone so far away. She would hardly have felt it; and she would have been less able to interfere——"

"To interfere!" startled.

"She could not interfere in the way of altering anything, but she could make us both very unhappy by reproaches. It does come rough on her, you know."

"I don't see why she should know, then. What is the use of making everybody uncomfortable for nothing?"

"Not know! Why, here comes rumour with a hundred tongues already! She will do all the mischief."

"And I was just thinking here comes the very chaperon you wanted," teasingly.

"If it could be managed," he exclaimed, his face lighting at the new idea, as Mrs. Dudley's knock was heard at the door.

The good lady was not only blessed with the hundred tongues of rumour, but with the hundred eyes of Argus. She had seen the two figures on the moor last night—for the Vicar's telescope commanded the whole sweep of the valley beneath the hill—and having arranged a pretext out of the Roman camp, she had come to find out what had happened after lady, knight, and steed had passed over the ridge that lay between the Vicarage and Heather Cottage. But she little realised how small was the ground she had had then for suspicion until she walked in upon Sir Everard and Miss Lyon, seated in familiar converse at the utterly unconventional hour of eleven a.m. She was so much surprised that she had not time to control her countenance. She stood transfixed and silent; only for a moment, but it seemed like several minutes, so many expressions succeeded each other on her face, so many fears and plans passed over Sir Everard's mind. But he was equal to the occasion, as an English gentleman always is. He said, joyously:

"Mrs. Dudley, this is charming! We want a confidant, and we want sympathy and congratulation; our happiness is too much to be borne alone. Miss Lyon has promised to be my wife."

"Never!" gasped Mrs. Dudley, a new set of emotions chasing each other over her

mind; wrath, of course, first, that this girl from nowhere should ensnare the baronet. Then a delighted recollection of what would be the incomparably greater wrath of her enemy, Helena; of all the humiliations she had suffered at Helena's hands being thus returned to her with interest. Then, as she was finding words to congratulate, and was shaken hands with so affectionately by both, came the soothing reflection that she had been taken into their confidence before anybody else.

"We are in a dilemma—two dilemmas, though," said Sir Everard, when the cross-fire of marvel, congratulations, and smiling thanks had subsided; "I wonder if you could help us? You are the wisest and most discreet of matrons. I think you can guess what is the first difficulty?" with another self-mocking smile.

"The step-daughter, I fear," answered Mrs. Dudley, shaking her head, more and more delighted at being admitted to such intimate confidence, and having by now fully perceived how much to her interest it would be to have such a footing at the Chase under the coming régime, as would be the certain lot of Lady Treverton's confidential friend, and Sir Everard's valued assistant in a time of difficulty; "she will feel it terribly; and one can hardly blame her. But, after all, it is not as if she were in the house; she will be far away in a very short time."

"Not such a short time as we hoped—expected, I mean."

And Sir Everard told the story of the postponed wedding—another delightful bit of news to be the first to carry round a series of afternoon calls.

"She will come and forbid the banns, you may be sure," said Mrs. Dudley, enjoying the sensation.

"I am very sorry," said Beatrix, so sadly that Sir Everard became alarmed lest she should insist on giving him up at once to the other claimant.

"How shall we keep the secret from her till it is all over?" Sir Everard appealed, pathetically.

"I cannot say," Mrs. Dudley returned, more stiffly; she did not like the idea she began to suspect of being required to be accessory to a secret marriage. "I suppose Miss Lyon will return to her home until she is married? Then she would not come into Miss Treverton's way for the present."

"I have no home just now," said Beatrix. "My father died just before I